

# Pre – AP United States History I

## Summer Assignment

June 2018

Welcome to the **Pre-AP USI** course here at LCMR.

As you may have already realized exams and the beginning of summer do not signal the postponement of learning. The summer months are an ideal time to stretch our minds with academic pursuits that we will not be able to squeeze into our school year. Just as athletes use the off season to work on skills and refine their game, so too do those who take on academically stringent classes. With our off season in mind, Pre-AP USI students are asked to read two historical articles before returning for class in September. There is one short paper to be written about these articles, and you can get ahead by doing it during the summer. This paper may be completed and turned in on TurnItIn.com. If you choose to wait till September, please note, it will be due the first Friday of school.

A large part of the APUSH program is to learn to understand point of view so that the student becomes aware of what version of the facts they are being presented. History is not only a group of dry facts; those who have control over the telling often place a slant to the facts. Understanding why they do this, as well as why these views change through time is part of our course work. So this summer you will tackle a traditional American hero – Christopher Columbus. Was he a brave soul who discovered America or was he a genocidal maniac concerned only with profit? It is time for you to decide.

Keep an eye on my website; you can access it through the main page for the district. The easiest way to do this is to go to the district home page, type “/eakins” after the address and my website will appear. If you have questions you may contact me through e-mail at [eakins@lcmrschools.com](mailto:eakins@lcmrschools.com).

Savor your summer days, those lazy ones spent at the beach, those crazy ones spent working, and especially those gratifying ones spent with a book, or article, in your hand.

Sincerely,  
S. Eakin  
Pre-AP USI Instructor

## Pre-AP USI – Eakin Summer Assignment Directions – 2018

### The Objective of This Assignment:

Developing historical thinking skills is an integral part of the APUSH experience. This summer assignment will give you the opportunity to explore the skills of comparison and point-of-view given that historical thinking involves the ability to identify, compare, and evaluate multiple perspectives on a given historical event.

### Directions:

\*Read the two attached articles

**\*Write a 400-500 word essay where you compare/contrast the two points of view presented about Christopher Columbus.**

\*Submit your papers to me via Turn It In. Due Date: Friday September 7, 2018 by 9pm.

The **Class ID is 18095949** and our class **password is Columbus**. Please go to [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com) and enroll yourself if you are not already using this. You may email me with any questions you have about this procedure; [eakins@lcmrschools.com](mailto:eakins@lcmrschools.com).

*\*Please note that choosing to ignore this assignment is NOT an option. And all work is expected to be your own. Failing to do the assignment properly will result in you being asked to leave the class.*

### General Notes:

**\*All work is to be word-processed** in Times New Roman size 12 font (or Calibri 11 in the newer versions of Word) with ‘normal’ margins and **double spaced**. If you are using Google Docs, please leave your settings on the normal ones with Arial 11 as the default. It is more important to have close to the required word count done well than to try to ‘fool’ me with wider margins! The heading is to be simple: your name, first and last, class period (if you know it), all on the first line with an extra space between the heading and your writing. If you would like to use MLA format for your heading that is permissible, but not required.

\*In history writings we stay away from 1<sup>st</sup> person.

\***Edit, Edit, Edit!!** Have someone assist you with proofreading if you can.

\*If you need these printed out, please do so in the library.

### Articles:

Two articles are attached, one by Howard Zinn and another by Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen. Read through them and take notes, underlining important facts or insights, and discern how each portrays the same events differently. When writing you should refer to the articles giving examples from the passages to back up your reasoning, however do not quote in length from the articles. **Remember you are not re-telling the story; you are examining the way Columbus is represented by the authors.**

E-mail me if you have any questions. ☺

## **Taken From Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States***

### Chapter 1: Columbus, The Indians, and Human Progress

Arawak men and women, naked, tawny, and full of wonder, emerged from their villages onto the island's beaches and swam out to get a closer look at the strange big boat. When Columbus and his sailors came ashore, carrying swords, speaking oddly, the Arawaks ran to greet them, brought them food, water, gifts. He later wrote of this in his log:

They ... brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawks' bells. They willingly traded everything they owned... . They were well-built, with good bodies and handsome features.... They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane... . They would make fine servants.... With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.

These Arawaks of the Bahama Islands were much like Indians on the mainland, who were remarkable (European observers were to say again and again) for their hospitality, their belief in sharing. These traits did not stand out in the Europe of the Renaissance, dominated as it was by the religion of popes, the government of kings, the frenzy for money that marked Western civilization and its first messenger to the Americas, Christopher Columbus.

Columbus wrote:

*As soon as I arrived in the Indies , on the first Island which I found, I took some of the natives by force in order that they might learn and might give me information of whatever there is in these parts.*

The information that Columbus wanted most was: Where is the gold? He had persuaded the king and queen of Spain to finance an expedition to the lands, the wealth, he expected would be on the other side of the Atlantic -the Indies and Asia, gold and spices. For, like other informed people of his time, he knew the world was round and he could sail west in order to get to the Far East .

Spain was recently unified, one of the new modern nation-states, like France, England, and Portugal . Its population, mostly poor peasants, worked for the nobility, who were 2 percent of the population and owned 95 percent of the land. Spain had tied itself to the Catholic Church, expelled all the Jews, driven out the Moors. Like other states of the modern world, Spain sought gold, which was becoming the new mark of wealth, more useful than land because it could buy anything.

There was gold in Asia, it was thought, and certainly silks and spices, for Marco Polo and others had brought back marvelous things from their overland expeditions centuries before. Now that the Turks had conquered Constantinople and the eastern Mediterranean, and controlled the land routes to

Asia, a sea route was needed. Portuguese sailors were working their way around the southern tip of Africa. Spain decided to gamble on a long sail across an unknown ocean.

In return for bringing back gold and spices, they promised Columbus 10 percent of the profits, governorship over new-found lands, and the fame that would go with a new tide: Admiral of the Ocean Sea . He was a merchant's clerk from the Italian city of Genoa, part-time weaver (the son of a skilled weaver), and expert sailor. He set out with three sailing ships, the largest of which was the Santa Maria, perhaps 100 feet long, and thirty-nine crew members.

Columbus would never have made it to Asia, which was thousands of miles farther away than he had calculated, imagining a smaller world. He would have been doomed by that great expanse of sea. But he was lucky. One-fourth of the way there he came upon an unknown, uncharted land that lay between Europe and Asia-the Americas. It was early October 1492, and thirty-three days since he and his crew had left the Canary Islands, off the Atlantic coast of Africa. Now they saw branches and sticks floating in the water. They saw flocks of birds.

These were signs of land. Then, on October 12, a sailor called Rodrigo saw the early morning moon shining on white sands, and cried out. It was an island in the Bahamas, the Caribbean sea. The first man to sight land was supposed to get a yearly pension of 10,000 maravedis for life, but Rodrigo never got it. Columbus claimed he had seen a light the evening before. He got the reward.

So, approaching land, they were met by the Arawak Indians, who swam out to greet them. The Arawaks lived in village communes, had a developed agriculture of corn, yams, cassava. They could spin and weave, but they had no horses or work animals. They had no iron, but they wore tiny gold ornaments in their ears.

This was to have enormous consequences: it led Columbus to take some of them aboard ship as prisoners because he insisted that they guide him to the source of the gold. He then sailed to what is now Cuba, then to Hispaniola (the island which today consists of Haiti and the Dominican Republic). There, bits of visible gold in the rivers, and a gold mask presented to Columbus by a local Indian chief, led to wild visions of gold fields.

On Hispaniola, out of timbers from the Santa Maria, which had run aground, Columbus built a fort, the first European military base in the Western Hemisphere. He called it Navidad (Christmas) and left thirty-nine crewmembers there, with instructions to find and store the gold. He took more Indian prisoners and put them aboard his two remaining ships. At one part of the island he got into a fight with Indians who refused to trade as many bows and arrows as he and his men wanted. Two were run through with swords and bled to death. Then the Nina and the Pinta set sail for the Azores and Spain. When the weather turned cold, the Indian prisoners began to die.

Columbus's report to the Court in Madrid was extravagant. He insisted he had reached Asia (it was Cuba) and an island off the coast of China (Hispaniola). His descriptions were part fact, part fiction:

Hispaniola is a miracle. Mountains and hills, plains and pastures, are both fertile and beautiful ... the harbors are unbelievably good and there are many wide rivers of which the majority contain gold. . . . There are many spices, and great mines of gold and other metals....

The Indians, Columbus reported, "are so naive and so free with their possessions that no one who has not witnessed them would believe it. When you ask for something they have, they never say no. To the contrary, they offer to share with anyone...." He concluded his report by asking for a little help from their Majesties, and in return he would bring them from his next voyage "as much gold as they need ... and as many slaves as they ask." He was full of religious talk: "Thus the eternal God, our Lord, gives victory to those who follow His way over apparent impossibilities."

Because of Columbus's exaggerated report and promises, his second expedition was given seventeen ships and more than twelve hundred men. The aim was clear: slaves and gold. They went from island to island in the Caribbean, taking Indians as captives. But as word spread of the Europeans' intent they found more and more empty villages. On Haiti, they found that the sailors left behind at Fort Navidad had been killed in a battle with the Indians, after they had roamed the island in gangs looking for gold, taking women and children as slaves for sex and labor.

Now, from his base on Haiti, Columbus sent expedition after expedition into the interior. They found no gold fields, but had to fill up the ships returning to Spain with some kind of dividend. In the year 1495, they went on a great slave raid, rounded up fifteen hundred Arawak men, women, and children, put them in pens guarded by Spaniards and dogs, then picked the five hundred best specimens to load onto ships. Of those five hundred, two hundred died en route. The rest arrived alive in Spain and were put up for sale by the archdeacon of the town, who reported that, although the slaves were "naked as the day they were born," they showed "no more embarrassment than animals." Columbus later wrote: "Let us in the name of the Holy Trinity go on sending all the slaves that can be sold."

But too many of the slaves died in captivity. And so Columbus, desperate to pay back dividends to those who had invested, had to make good his promise to fill the ships with gold. In the province of Cicao on Haiti, where he and his men imagined huge gold fields to exist, they ordered all persons fourteen years or older to collect a certain quantity of gold every three months. When they brought it, they were given copper tokens to hang around their necks. Indians found without a copper token had their hands cut off and bled to death.

The Indians had been given an impossible task. The only gold around was bits of dust garnered from the streams. So they fled, were hunted down with dogs, and were killed.

Trying to put together an army of resistance, the Arawaks faced Spaniards who had armor, muskets, swords, horses. When the Spaniards took prisoners they hanged them or burned them to death. Among the Arawaks, mass suicides began, with cassava poison. Infants were killed to save them from the Spaniards. In two years, through murder, mutilation, or suicide, half of the 250,000 Indians on Haiti were dead.

When it became clear that there was no gold left, the Indians were taken as slave labor on huge estates, known later as *encomiendas*. They were worked at a ferocious pace, and died by the thousands. By the year 1515, there were perhaps fifty thousand Indians left. By 1550, there were five hundred. A report of the year 1650 shows none of the original Arawaks or their descendants left on the island.

The chief source-and, on many matters the only source-of information about what happened on the islands after Columbus came is Bartolome de las Casas, who, as a young priest, participated in the conquest of Cuba. For a time he owned a plantation on which Indian slaves worked, but he gave that up and became a vehement critic of Spanish cruelty. LasCasas transcribed Columbus's journal and, in his fifties, began a multivolume *History of the Indies*. In it, he describes the Indians. They are agile, he says, and can swim long distances, especially the women. They are not completely peaceful, because they do battle from time to time with other tribes, but their casualties seem small, and they fight when they are individually moved to do so because of some grievance, not on the orders of captains or kings.

Women in Indian society were treated so well as to startle the Spaniards. Las Casas describes sex relations:

Marriage laws are non-existent men and women alike choose their mates and leave them as they please, without offense, jealousy or anger. They multiply in great abundance; pregnant women work to the last minute and give birth almost painlessly; up the next day, they bathe in the river and are as clean and healthy as before giving birth. If they tire of their men, they give

themselves abortions with herbs that force a stillbirth, covering their shameful parts with leaves or cotton cloth; although on the whole, Indian men and women look upon total nakedness with as much casualness as we look upon a man's head or at his hands.

The Indians, Las Casas says, have no religion, at least no temples. They live in...

large communal bell-shaped buildings, housing up to 600 people at one time ... made of very strong wood and roofed with palm leaves.... They prize bird feathers of various colors, beads made of fishbones, and green and white stones with which they adorn their ears and lips, but they put no value on gold and other precious things. They lack all manner of commerce, neither buying nor selling, and rely exclusively on their natural environment for maintenance. They are extremely generous with their possessions and by the same token covet the possessions of their friends and expect the same degree of liberality. ...

In Book Two of his History of the Indies, Las Casas (who at first urged replacing Indians by black slaves, thinking they were stronger and would survive, but later relented when he saw the effects on blacks) tells about the treatment of the Indians by the Spaniards. It is a unique account and deserves to be quoted at length:

Endless testimonies . . . prove the mild and pacific temperament of the natives.... But our work was to exasperate, ravage, kill, mangle and destroy; small wonder, then, if they tried to kill one of us now and then.... The admiral, it is true, was blind as those who came after him, and he was so anxious to please the King that he committed irreparable crimes against the Indians....

Las Casas tells how the Spaniards "grew more conceited every day" and after a while refused to walk any distance. They "rode the backs of Indians if they were in a hurry" or were carried on hammocks by Indians running in relays. "In this case they also had Indians carry large leaves to shade them from the sun and others to fan them with goose wings."

Total control led to total cruelty. The Spaniards "thought nothing of knifing Indians by tens and twenties and of cutting slices off them to test the sharpness of their blades." Las Casas tells how "two of these so-called Christians met two Indian boys one day, each carrying a parrot; they took the parrots and for fun beheaded the boys."

The Indians' attempts to defend themselves failed. And when they ran off into the hills they were found and killed. So, Las Casas reports, "they suffered and died in the mines and other labors in desperate silence, knowing not a soul in the world to whom they could turn for help." He describes their work in the mines:

... mountains are stripped from top to bottom and bottom to top a thousand times; they dig, split rocks, move stones, and carry dirt on their backs to wash it in the rivers, while those who wash gold stay in the water all the time with their backs bent so constantly it breaks them; and when water invades the mines, the most arduous task of all is to dry the mines by scooping up pansful of water and throwing it up outside....

After each six or eight months' work in the mines, which was the time required of each crew to dig enough gold for melting, up to a third of the men died.

While the men were sent many miles away to the mines, the wives remained to work the soil, forced into the excruciating job of digging and making thousands of hills for cassava plants.

Thus husbands and wives were together only once every eight or ten months and when they met they were so exhausted and depressed on both sides ... they ceased to procreate. As for the newly born, they died early because their mothers, overworked and famished, had no milk to nurse them, and for this reason, while I was in Cuba, 7000 children died in three months. Some

mothers even drowned their babies from sheer desperation.... In this way, husbands died in the mines, wives died at work, and children died from lack of milk . . . and in a short time this land which was so great, so powerful and fertile ... was depopulated. ... My eyes have seen these acts so foreign to human nature, and now I tremble as I write. ...

When he arrived on Hispaniola in 1508, Las Casas says, "there were 60,000 people living on this island, including the Indians; so that from 1494 to 1508, over three million people had perished from war, slavery, and the mines. Who in future generations will believe this? I myself writing it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it...."

Thus began the history, five hundred years ago, of the European invasion of the Indian settlements in the Americas. That beginning, when you read Las Casas-even if his figures are exaggerations (were there 3 million Indians to begin with, as he says, or less than a million, as some historians have calculated, or 8 million as others now believe?)-is conquest, slavery, death. When we read the history books given to children in the United States, it all starts with heroic adventure-there is no bloodshed-and Columbus Day is a celebration.

Past the elementary and high schools, there are only occasional hints of something else. Samuel Eliot Morison, the Harvard historian, was the most distinguished writer on Columbus, the author of a multivolume biography, and was himself a sailor who retraced Columbus's route across the Atlantic. In his popular book *Christopher Columbus, Mariner*, written in 1954, he tells about the enslavement and the killing: "The cruel policy initiated by Columbus and pursued by his successors resulted in complete genocide."

That is on one page, buried halfway into the telling of a grand romance. In the book's last paragraph, Morison sums up his view of Columbus:

He had his faults and his defects, but they were largely the defects of the qualities that made him great-his indomitable will, his superb faith in God and in his own mission as the Christ-bearer to lands beyond the seas, his stubborn persistence despite neglect, poverty and discouragement. But there was no flaw, no dark side to the most outstanding and essential of all his qualities-his seamanship.

One can lie outright about the past. Or one can omit facts which might lead to unacceptable conclusions. Morison does neither. He refuses to lie about Columbus. He does not omit the story of mass murder; indeed he describes it with the harshest word one can use: genocide.

But he does something else-he mentions the truth quickly and goes on to other things more important to him. Outright lying or quiet omission takes the risk of discovery which, when made, might arouse the reader to rebel against the writer. To state the facts, however, and then to bury them in a mass of other information is to say to the reader with a certain infectious calm: yes, mass murder took place, but it's not that important-it should weigh very little in our final judgments; it should affect very little what we do in the world.

It is not that the historian can avoid emphasis of some facts and not of others. This is as natural to him as to the mapmaker, who, in order to produce a usable drawing for practical purposes, must first flatten and distort the shape of the earth, then choose out of the bewildering mass of geographic information those things needed for the purpose of this or that particular map.

My argument cannot be against selection, simplification, emphasis, which are inevitable for both cartographers and historians. But the map-maker's distortion is a technical necessity for a common purpose shared by all people who need maps. The historian's distortion is more than technical, it is ideological; it is released into a world of contending interests, where any chosen emphasis supports

(whether the historian means to or not) some kind of interest, whether economic or political or racial or national or sexual.

Furthermore, this ideological interest is not openly expressed in the way a mapmaker's technical interest is obvious ("This is a Mercator projection for long-range navigation-for short-range, you'd better use a different projection"). No, it is presented as if all readers of history had a common interest which historians serve to the best of their ability. This is not intentional deception; the historian has been trained in a society in which education and knowledge are put forward as technical problems of excellence and not as tools for contending social classes, races, nations.

To emphasize the heroism of Columbus and his successors as navigators and discoverers, and to de-emphasize their genocide, is not a technical necessity but an ideological choice. It serves-unwittingly-to justify what was done.

My point is not that we must, in telling history, accuse, judge, condemn Columbus in absentia. It is too late for that; it would be a useless scholarly exercise in morality. But the easy acceptance of atrocities as a deplorable but necessary price to pay for progress (Hiroshima and Vietnam, to save Western civilization; Kronstadt and Hungary, to save socialism; nuclear proliferation, to save us all)-that is still with us. One reason these atrocities are still with us is that we have learned to bury them in a mass of other facts, as radioactive wastes are buried in containers in the earth. We have learned to give them exactly the same proportion of attention that teachers and writers often give them in the most respectable of classrooms and textbooks. This learned sense of moral proportion, coming from the apparent objectivity of the scholar, is accepted more easily than when it comes from politicians at press conferences. It is therefore more deadly.

The treatment of heroes (Columbus) and their victims (the Arawaks)-the quiet acceptance of conquest and murder in the name of progress-is only one aspect of a certain approach to history, in which the past is told from the point of view of governments, conquerors, diplomats, leaders. It is as if they, like Columbus, deserve universal acceptance, as if they-the Founding Fathers, Jackson, Lincoln, Wilson, Roosevelt, Kennedy, the leading members of

Congress, the famous Justices of the Supreme Court-represent the nation as a whole. The pretense is that there really is such a thing as "the United States," subject to occasional conflicts and quarrels, but fundamentally a community of people with common interests. It is as if there really is a "national interest" represented in the Constitution, in territorial expansion, in the laws passed by Congress, the decisions of the courts, the development of capitalism, the culture of education and the mass media.

## **Taken From Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen's *A Patriot's History of the United States***

### Chapter 1: The City on the Hill, 1492-1707

#### **The Age of European Discovery**

God, glory, and gold—not necessarily in that order—took post-Renaissance Europeans to parts of the globe they had never before seen. The opportunity to gain materially while bringing the Gospel to non-Christians offered powerful incentives to explorers from Portugal, Spain, England, and France to embark on dangerous voyages of discovery in the 1400s. Certainly they were not the first to sail to the Western Hemisphere: Norse sailors reached the coasts of Iceland in 874 and Greenland a century later, and legends recorded Leif Erickson's establishment of a colony in Vinland, somewhere on the northern Canadian coast.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the fate of Vinland, its historical impact was minimal, and significant voyages of discovery did not occur for more than five hundred years, when trade with the Orient beckoned.

Marco Polo and other travelers to Cathay (China) had brought exaggerated tales of wealth in the East and returned with unusual spices, dyes, rugs, silks, and other goods. But this was a difficult, long journey. Land routes crossed dangerous territories, including imposing mountains and vast deserts of modern-day Afghanistan, northern India, Iran, and Iraq, and required expensive and well-protected caravans to reach Europe from Asia. Merchants encountered bandits who threatened transportation lanes, kings and potentates who demanded tribute, and bloodthirsty killers who pillaged for pleasure. Trade routes from Bombay and Goa reached Europe via Persia or Arabia, crossing the Ottoman Empire with its internal taxes. Cargo had to be unloaded at seaports, then reloaded at Alexandria or Antioch for water transport across the Mediterranean, or continued on land before crossing the Dardanelles Strait into modern-day Bulgaria to the Danube River. European demand for such goods seemed endless, enticing merchants and their investors to engage in a relentless search for lower costs brought by safer and cheaper routes. Gradually, Europeans concluded that more direct water routes to the Far East must exist.

The search for Cathay's treasure coincided with three factors that made long ocean voyages possible. First, sailing and shipbuilding technology had advanced rapidly after the ninth century, thanks in part to the Arabs' development of the astrolabe, a device with a pivoted limb that established the sun's altitude above the horizon. By the late tenth century, astrolabe technology had made its way to Spain.<sup>2</sup> Farther north, Vikings pioneered new methods of hull construction, among them the use of overlapping planks for internal support that enabled vessels to withstand violent ocean storms. Sailors of the Hanseatic League states on the Baltic coast experimented with larger ship designs that incorporated sternpost rudders for better control. Yet improved ships alone were not enough: explorers needed the accurate maps generated by Italian seamen and sparked by the new inquisitive impulse of the Renaissance. Thus a wide range of technologies coalesced to encourage long-range voyages of discovery.

Political changes, a second factor giving birth to the age of discovery, resulted from the efforts of several ambitious European monarchs to consolidate their possessions into larger, cohesive

dynastic states. This unification of lands, which increased the taxable base within the kingdoms, greatly increased the funding available to expeditions and provided better military protection (in the form of warships) at no cost to investors. By the time a combined Venetian-Spanish fleet defeated a much larger Ottoman force at Lepanto in 1571, the vessels of Christian nations could essentially sail with impunity anywhere in the Mediterranean. Then, in control of the Mediterranean, Europeans could consider voyages of much longer duration (and cost) than they ever had in the past. A new generation of explorers found that monarchs could support even more expensive undertakings that integrated the monarch's interests with the merchants'.<sup>3</sup>

Third, the Protestant Reformation of 1517 fostered a fierce and bloody competition for power and territory between Catholic and Protestant nations that reinforced national concerns. England competed for land with Spain, not merely for economic and political reasons, but because the English feared the possibility that Spain might catholicize numbers of non-Christians in new lands, whereas Catholics trembled at the thought of subjecting natives to Protestant heresies. Therefore, even when economic or political gains for discovery and colonization may have been marginal, monarchs had strong religious incentives to open their royal treasuries to support such missions.

#### Time Line

1492–1504: Columbus's four voyages  
1519–21: Cortés conquers Mexico  
1585–87: Roanoke Island (Carolinas) colony fails  
1607: Jamestown, Virginia, founded  
1619: First Africans arrive in Virginia  
1619: Virginia House of Burgesses formed  
1620: Pilgrims found Plymouth, Massachusetts  
1630: Puritan migration to Massachusetts  
1634: Calverts found Maryland  
1635–36: Pequot Indian War (Massachusetts)  
1638: Anne Hutchinson convicted of heresy  
1639: Fundamental Orders of Connecticut  
1642–48: English Civil War  
1650: First Navigation Act (mercantilism)  
1664: English conquer New Netherlands (New York)  
1675–76: King Philip's (Metacomet's) War (Massachusetts)  
1676: Bacon's Rebellion (Virginia)  
1682: Pennsylvania settled  
1688–89: English Glorious Revolution and Bill of Rights  
1691: Salem witch hunts

#### Portugal and Spain: The Explorers

Ironically, one of the smallest of the new monarchical states, Portugal, became the first to subsidize extensive exploration in the fifteenth century. The most famous of the Portuguese explorers, Prince Henry, dubbed the Navigator, was the brother of King Edward of Portugal. Henry (1394–1460) had earned a reputation as a tenacious fighter in North Africa against the Moors, and he hoped to roll back the Muslim invaders and reclaim from them trade routes and territory.

A true Renaissance man, Henry immersed himself in mapmaking and exploration from a coastal center he established at Sagres, on the southern point of Portugal. There he trained navigators and

mapmakers, dispatched ships to probe the African coast, and evaluated the reports of sailors who returned from the Azores.<sup>4</sup> Portuguese captains made contact with Arabs and Africans in coastal areas and established trading centers, from which they brought ivory and gold to Portugal, then transported slaves to a variety of Mediterranean estates. This early slave trade was conducted through Arab middlemen or African traders who carried out slaving expeditions in the interior and exchanged captive men, women, and children for fish, wine, or salt on the coast.

Henry saw these relatively small trading outposts as only the first step in developing reliable water routes to the East. Daring sailors trained at Henry's school soon pushed farther southward, finally rounding the Cape of Storms in 1486, when Bartholomeu Dias was blown off course by fantastic winds. King John II eventually changed the name of the cape to the Cape of Good Hope, reflecting the promise of a new route to India offered by Dias's discovery. That promise became reality in 1498, after Vasco de Gama sailed to Calicut, India. An abrupt decline in Portuguese fortunes led to her eclipse by the larger Spain, reducing the resources available for investment in exploration and limiting Portuguese voyages to the Indian Ocean to an occasional "boatload of convicts."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the prize for which Portuguese explorers had risked so much now seemed small in comparison to that discovered by their rivals the Spanish under the bold seamanship of Christopher Columbus, a man the king of Portugal had once refused to fund.

Columbus departed from Spain in August 1492, laying in a course due west and ultimately in a direct line to Japan, although he never mentioned Cathay prior to 1493.<sup>6</sup> A native of Genoa, Columbus embodied the best of the new generation of navigators: resilient, courageous, and confident. To be sure, Columbus wanted glory, and a motivation born of desperation fueled his vision. At the same time, Columbus was "earnestly desirous of taking Christianity to heathen lands."<sup>7</sup> He did not, as is popularly believed, originate the idea that the earth is round. As early as 1480, for example, he read works proclaiming the sphericity of the planet. But knowing intellectually that the earth is round and demonstrating it physically are two different things.

Columbus's fleet consisted of only three vessels, the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa María, and a crew of ninety men. Leaving port in August 1492, the expedition eventually passed the point where the sailors expected to find Japan, generating no small degree of anxiety, whereupon Columbus used every managerial skill he possessed to maintain discipline and encourage hope. The voyage had stretched to ten weeks when the crew bordered on mutiny, and only the captain's reassurance and exhortations persuaded the sailors to continue a few more days. Finally, on October 11, 1492, they started to see signs of land: pieces of wood loaded with barnacles, green bulrushes, and other vegetation.<sup>8</sup> A lookout spotted land, and on October 12, 1492, the courageous band waded ashore on Watling Island in the Bahamas, where his men begged his pardon for doubting him.<sup>9</sup>

Columbus continued to Cuba, which he called Hispaniola. At the time he thought he had reached the Far East, and referred to the dark-skinned people he found in Hispaniola as Indians. He found these Indians "very well formed, with handsome bodies and good faces," and hoped to convert them "to our Holy Faith by love rather than by force" by giving them red caps and glass beads "and many other things of small value."<sup>10</sup> Dispatching emissaries into the interior to contact the Great Khan, Columbus's scouts returned with no reports of the spices, jewels, silks, or other evidence of Cathay; nor did the khan send his regards. Nevertheless, Columbus returned to Spain confident he had found an ocean passage to the Orient.<sup>11</sup>

Reality gradually forced Columbus to a new conclusion: he had not reached India or China, and

after a second voyage in 1493—still convinced he was in the Pacific Ocean—Columbus admitted he had stumbled on a new land mass, perhaps even a new continent of astounding natural resources and wealth. In February 1493, he wrote his Spanish patrons that Hispaniola and other islands like it were “fertile to a limitless degree,” possessing mountains covered by “trees of a thousand kinds and tall, so that they seem to touch the sky.”<sup>12</sup> He confidently promised gold, cotton, spices—as much as Their Highnesses should command—in return for only minimal continued support. Meanwhile, he continued to probe the *Mundus Novus* south and west. After returning to Spain yet again, Columbus made two more voyages to the New World in 1498 and 1502.

Whether Columbus had found parts of the Far East or an entirely new land was irrelevant to most Europeans at the time. Political distractions abounded in Europe. Spain had barely evicted the Muslims after the long Reconquista, and England’s Wars of the Roses had scarcely ended. News of Columbus’s discoveries excited only a few merchants, explorers, and dreamers. Still, the prospect of finding a waterway to Asia infatuated sailors; and in 1501 a Florentine passenger on a Portuguese voyage, Amerigo Vespucci, wrote letters to his friends in which he described the New World. His self-promoting dispatches circulated sooner than Columbus’s own written accounts, and as a result the term “America” soon was attached by geographers to the continents in the Western Hemisphere that should by right have been named Columbia. But if Columbus did not receive the honor of having the New World named for him, and if he acquired only temporary wealth and fame in Spain (receiving from the Crown the title Admiral of the Ocean Sea), his place in history was never in doubt. Historian Samuel Eliot Morison, a worthy seaman in his own right who reenacted the Columbian voyages in 1939 and 1940, described Columbus as “the sign and symbol [of the] new age of hope, glory and accomplishment.”<sup>13</sup>

Once Columbus blazed the trail, other Spanish explorers had less trouble obtaining financial backing for expeditions. Vasco Núñez de Balboa (1513) crossed the Isthmus of Panama to the Pacific Ocean (as he named it). Ferdinand Magellan (1519–22) circumnavigated the globe, lending his name to the Strait of Magellan. Other expeditions explored the interior of the newly discovered lands. Juan Ponce de León, traversing an area along Florida’s coast, attempted unsuccessfully to plant a colony there. Pánfilo de Narváez’s subsequent expedition to conquer Tampa Bay proved even more disastrous. Narváez himself drowned, and natives killed members of his expedition until only four of them reached a Spanish settlement in Mexico.

Spaniards traversed modern-day Mexico, probing interior areas under Hernando Cortés, who in 1518 led a force of 1,000 soldiers to Tenochtitlán, the site of present-day Mexico City. Cortés encountered powerful Indians called Aztecs, led by their emperor Montezuma. The Aztecs had established a brutal regime that oppressed other natives of the region, capturing large numbers of them for ritual sacrifices in which Aztec priests cut out the beating hearts of living victims. Such barbarity enabled the Spanish to easily enlist other tribes, especially the Tlaxcalans, in their efforts to defeat the Aztecs.

Tenochtitlán sat on an island in the middle of a lake, connected to the outlying areas by three huge causeways. It was a monstrously large city (for the time) of at least 200,000, rigidly divided into nobles and commoner groups.<sup>14</sup> Aztec culture created impressive pyramid-shaped temple structures, but Aztec science lacked the simple wheel and the wide range of pulleys and gears that it enabled. But it was sacrifice, not science, that defined Aztec society, whose pyramids, after all, were execution sites. A four-day sacrifice in 1487 by the Aztec king Ahuitzotl involved the butchery of 80,400 prisoners by shifts of priests working four at a time at convex killing tables who

kicked lifeless, heartless bodies down the side of the pyramid temple. This worked out to a “killing rate of fourteen victims a minute over the ninety-six-hour bloodbath.”<sup>15</sup> In addition to the abominable sacrifice system, crime and street carnage were commonplace. More intriguing to the Spanish than the buildings, or even the sacrifices, however, were the legends of gold, silver, and other riches Tenochtitlán contained, protected by the powerful Aztec army.

Cortés first attempted a direct assault on the city and fell back with heavy losses, narrowly escaping extermination. Desperate Spanish fought their way out on Noche Triste (the Sad Night), when hundreds of them fell on the causeway. Cortés’s men piled human bodies—Aztec and European alike—in heaps to block Aztec pursuers, then staggered back to Vera Cruz. In 1521 Cortés returned with a new Spanish army, supported by more than 75,000 Indian allies.<sup>16</sup> This time, he found a weakened enemy who had been ravaged by smallpox, or as the Aztecs called it, “the great leprosy.” Starvation killed those Aztecs whom the disease did not: “They died in heaps, like bedbugs,” wrote one historian.<sup>17</sup> Even so, neither disease nor starvation accounted for the Spaniards’ stunning victory over the vastly larger Aztec forces, which can be credited to the Spanish use of European style disciplined shock combat and the employment of modern firepower. Severing the causeways, stationing huge units to guard each, Cortés assaulted the city walls from thirteen brigantines the Spaniards had hauled overland, sealing off the city. These brigantines proved “far more ingeniously engineered for fighting on the Aztecs’ native waters than any boat constructed in Mexico during the entire history of its civilization.”<sup>18</sup> When it came to the final battle, it was not the brigantines, but Cortés’s use of cannons, muskets, harquebuses, crossbows, and pikes in deadly discipline, firing in order, and standing en masse against a murderous mass of Aztecs who fought as individuals rather than a cohesive force that proved decisive.

Spanish technology, including the wheel-related ratchet gears on muskets, constituted only one element of European military superiority. They fought as other European land armies fought, in formation, with their officers open to new ideas based on practicality, not theology. Where no Aztec would dare approach the godlike Montezuma with a military strategy, Cortés debated tactics with his lieutenants routinely, and the European way of war endowed each Castilian soldier with a sense of individual rights, civic duty, and personal freedom nonexistent in the Aztec kingdom. Moreover, the Europeans sought to kill their enemy and force his permanent surrender, not forge an arrangement for a steady supply of sacrifice victims. Thus Cortés captured the Aztec capital in 1521 at a cost of more than 100,000 Aztec dead, many from disease resulting from Cortés’s cutting the city’s water supply.<sup>19</sup> But not all diseases came from the Old World to the New, and syphilis appears to have been retransmitted back from Brazil to Portugal.<sup>20</sup>

More to the point, no native culture could have conceived of maintaining expeditions of thousands of men in the field for months at a time. Virtually all of the natives lived off the land and took slaves back to their home, as opposed to colonizing new territory with their own settlers. Indeed, only the European industrial engine could have provided the material wherewithal to maintain such armies, and only the European political constructs of liberty, property rights, and nationalism kept men in combat for abstract political causes. European combat style produced yet another advantage in that firearms showed no favoritism on the battlefield. Spanish gunfire destroyed the hierarchy of the enemy, including the aristocratic dominant political class. Aztec chiefs and Moor sultans alike were completely vulnerable to massed firepower, yet without the legal framework of republicanism and civic virtue like Europe’s to replace its leadership cadre, a native army could be decapitated at the head with one volley, whereas the Spanish forces could see lieutenants fall and seamlessly replace them with sergeants.

## Did Columbus Kill Most of the Indians?

The five-hundred-year anniversary of Columbus's discovery was marked by unusual and strident controversy. Rising up to challenge the intrepid voyager's courage and vision—as well as the establishment of European civilization in the New World—was a crescendo of damnation, which posited that the Genoese navigator was a mass murderer akin to Adolf Hitler. Even the establishment of European outposts was, according to the revisionist critique, a regrettable development. Although this division of interpretations no doubt confused and dampened many a Columbian festival in 1992, it also elicited a most intriguing historical debate: did the esteemed Admiral of the Ocean Sea kill almost all the Indians? A number of recent scholarly studies have dispelled or at least substantially modified many of the numbers generated by the anti-Columbus groups, although other new research has actually increased them. Why the sharp inconsistencies? One recent scholar, examining the major assessments of numbers, points to at least nine different measurement methods, including the time-worn favorite, guesstimates.

1. Pre-Columbian native population numbers are much smaller than critics have maintained. For example, one author claims “Approximately 56 million people died as a result of European exploration in the New World.” For that to have occurred, however, one must start with early estimates for the population of the Western Hemisphere at nearly 100 million. Recent research suggests that that number is vastly inflated, and that the most reliable figure is nearer 53 million, and even that estimate falls with each new publication. Since 1976 alone, experts have lowered their estimates by 4 million. Some scholars have even seen those figures as wildly inflated, and several studies put the native population of North America alone within a range of 8.5 million (the highest) to a low estimate of 1.8 million. If the latter number is true, it means that the “holocaust” or “depopulation” that occurred was one fiftieth of the original estimates, or 800,000 Indians who died from disease and firearms. Although that number is a universe away from the estimates of 50 to 60 million deaths that some researchers have trumpeted, it still represented a destruction of half the native population.

Even then, the guesstimates involve such things as accounting for the effects of epidemics—which other researchers, using the same data, dispute ever occurred—or expanding the sample area to all of North and Central America. However, estimating the number of people alive in a region five hundred years ago has proven difficult, and recently several researchers have called into question most early estimates. For example, one method many scholars have used to arrive at population numbers—extrapolating from early explorers' estimates of populations they could count—has been challenged by archaeological studies of the Amazon basin, where dense settlements were once thought to exist. Work in the area by Betty Meggers concludes that the early explorers' estimates were exaggerated and that no evidence of large populations in that region exists. N. D. Cook's demographic research on the Inca in Peru showed that the population could have been as high as 15 million or as low as 4 million, suggesting that the measurement mechanisms have a “plus or minus reliability factor” of 400 percent! Such “minor” exaggerations as the tendencies of some explorers to overestimate their opponents' numbers, which, when factored throughout numerous villages, then into entire populations, had led to overestimates of millions.

2. Native populations had epidemics long before Europeans arrived. A recent study of more than 12,500 skeletons from sixty-five sites found that native health was on a “downward trajectory long before Columbus arrived.” Some suggest that Indians may have had a nonvenereal form of syphilis, and almost all agree that a variety of infections were widespread. Tuberculosis existed in Central

and North America long before the Spanish appeared, as did herpes, polio, tick-borne fevers, giardiasis, and amebic dysentery. One admittedly controversial study by Henry Dobyns in *Current Anthropology* in 1966 later fleshed out over the years into his book, argued that extensive epidemics swept North America before Europeans arrived. As one authority summed up the research, "Though the Old World was to contribute to its diseases, the New World certainly was not the Garden of Eden some have depicted." As one might expect, others challenged Dobyns and the "early epidemic" school, but the point remains that experts are divided. Many now discount the notion that huge epidemics swept through Central and North America; smallpox, in particular, did not seem to spread as a pandemic.

3. There is little evidence available for estimating the numbers of people lost in warfare prior to the Europeans because in general natives did not keep written records. Later, when whites could document oral histories during the Indian wars on the western frontier, they found that different tribes exaggerated their accounts of battles in totally different ways, depending on tribal custom. Some, who preferred to emphasize bravery over brains, inflated casualty numbers. Others, viewing large body counts as a sign of weakness, deemphasized their losses. What is certain is that vast numbers of natives were killed by other natives, and that only technological backwardness—the absence of guns, for example—prevented the numbers of natives killed by other natives from growing even higher.

4. Large areas of Mexico and the Southwest were depopulated more than a hundred years before the arrival of Columbus. According to a recent source, "The majority of Southwesternists...believe that many areas of the Greater Southwest were abandoned or largely depopulated over a century before Columbus's fateful discovery, as a result of climatic shifts, warfare, resource mismanagement, and other causes." Indeed, a new generation of scholars puts more credence in early Spanish explorers' observations of widespread ruins and decaying "great houses" that they contended had been abandoned for years.

5. European scholars have long appreciated the dynamic of small-state diplomacy, such as was involved in the Italian or German small states in the nineteenth century. What has been missing from the discussions about native populations has been a recognition that in many ways the tribes resembled the small states in Europe: they concerned themselves more with traditional enemies (other tribes) than with new ones (whites).

Sources: The best single review of all the literature on Indian population numbers is John D. Daniels's "The Indian Population of North America in 1492," *William and Mary Quarterly*, April 1999, pp. 298–320. Among those who cite higher numbers are David Meltzer, "How Columbus Sickened the New World," *The New Scientist*, October 10, 1992, 38–41; Francis L. Black, "Why Did They Die?" *Science*, December 11, 1992, 139–140; and Alfred W. Crosby Jr., *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Lower estimates come from the Smithsonian's Douglas Ubelaker, "North American Indian Population Size, A.D. 1500–1985," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 77(1988), 289–294; and William H. MacLeish, *The Day Before America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994). Henry F. Dobyns, *American Historical Demography* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1976), calculated a number somewhat in the middle, or about 40 million, then subsequently revisited the argument, with William R. Swagerty, in *Their Number Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America*, *Native American Historic Demography*

Series (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1983). But, as Nobelist David Cook's study of Incaic Peru reveals, weaknesses in the data remain; see *Demographic Collapse: Indian Peru, 1520–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Betty Meggers's "Prehistoric

Population Density in the Amazon Basin" (in John W. Verano and Douglas H. Ubelaker, *Disease and Demography in the Americas* [Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992], 197–206), offers a lower-bound 3 million estimate for Amazonia (far lower than the higher-bound 10 million estimates). An excellent historiography of the debate appears in Daniel T. Reff, *Disease, Depopulation, and Culture Change in Northwestern New Spain, 1518–1764* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1991). He argues for a reconsideration of disease as the primary source of

depopulation (instead of European cruelty or slavery), but does not support inflated numbers. A recent synthesis of several studies can be found in Michael R. Haines and Richard H. Steckel, *A Population History of North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Also see Richard H. Steckel and Jerome C. Rose, eds., *The Backbone of History: Health and Nutrition in the*

*Western Hemisphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). The quotation referring to this study is from John Wilford, "Don't Blame Columbus for All the Indians' Ills," *New York Times*, October 29, 2002.

Technology and disease certainly played prominent roles in the conquest of Spanish America. But the oppressive nature of the Aztecs played no small role in their overthrow, and in both Peru and Mexico, "The structure of the Indian societies facilitated the Spanish conquest at ridiculously low cost."<sup>22</sup> In addition, Montezuma's ruling hierarchical, strongly centralized structure, in which subjects devoted themselves and their labor to the needs of the state, made it easy for the Spanish to adapt the system to their own control. Once the Spanish had eliminated Aztec leadership, they replaced it with themselves at the top. The "common people" exchanged one group of despots for another, of a different skin color.

By the time the Aztecs fell, the news that silver existed in large quantities in Mexico had reached Spain, attracting still other conquistadores. Hernando de Soto explored Florida (1539–1541), succeeding where Juan Ponce de León had failed, and ultimately crossed the Mississippi River, dying there in 1542. Meanwhile, marching northward from Mexico, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado pursued other Indian legends of riches in the Seven Cities of Cibola. Supposedly, gold and silver existed in abundance there, but Coronado's 270-man expedition found none of the fabled cities, and in 1541 he returned to Spain, having mapped much of the American Southwest. By the 1570s enough was known about Mexico and the Southwest to attract settlers, and some two hundred Spanish settlements existed, containing in all more than 160,000 Europeans.

Traveling with every expedition were priests and friars, and the first permanent building erected by Spaniards was often a church. Conquistadores genuinely believed that converting the heathen ranked near—or even above—the acquisition of riches. Even as the Dominican friar and Bishop of Chiapas, Bartolomé de Las Casas, sharply criticized his countrymen in his writings for making "bloody, unjust, and cruel wars" against the Indians—the so-called Black Legend—a second army of mercy, Spanish missionaries, labored selflessly under harsh conditions to bring the Gospel to the Indians. In some cases, as with the Pueblo Indians, large numbers of Indians converted to Christianity, albeit a mixture of traditional Catholic teachings and their own religious practices, which, of course, the Roman Church deplored. Attempts to suppress such distortions led to

uprisings such as the 1680 Pueblo revolt that killed twenty-one priests and hundreds of Spanish colonists, although even the rebellious Pueblos eventually rejoined the Spanish as allies.<sup>23</sup>

Explorers had to receive from the king a license that entitled the grantee to large estates and a percentage of returns from the expedition. From the estates, explorers carved out ranches that provided an agricultural base and encouraged other settlers to immigrate. Then, after the colonists had founded a mission, the Spanish government established formal forts (presidios). The most prominent of the presidios dotted the California coast, with the largest at San Diego. Royal governors and local bureaucrats maintained the empire in Mexico and the Southwest with considerable autonomy from Spain. Distance alone made it difficult for the Crown to control activities in the New World.

A new culture accompanied the Spanish occupation. With intermarriage between Europeans and Indians, a large mestizo population (today, referred to as Mexican or Hispanic people) resulted. It generally adopted Spanish culture and values.